



Department of  
Education

Shaping the future

# Aspirations for all

Our students, our people,  
our schools – our system



# Acknowledgement of Country

**We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians of the lands, seas, skies and waterways where we are privileged to live and work.**

We acknowledge Elders past and present, who generously share their knowledge and wisdom and continue to nurture Country, share culture, and strengthen communities. We acknowledge the strengths and cultural identities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students bring to their classrooms and strive to build a culturally responsive system that supports them as they walk in the footsteps of their ancestors.

We acknowledge and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we connect with; we commit to building a brighter future together, enriched by their oral histories, stories, lived experiences and living cultures.

This statement uses the term 'Aboriginal' to respectfully refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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# Director General's foreword

**This statement reflects my commitment to providing all our staff with a clear and shared sense of direction for public schools in Western Australia.**

It will be followed by a strategic plan to detail the practical actions that will be taken over several years to realise our aspirations. As a backdrop to the strategic plan, this statement signals the major challenges and opportunities that lie ahead and explains the convictions and beliefs that will guide our response.

For all of us who work in public education, our primary duty is to our students – to provide an education that will enable every one of them to achieve their potential. But this will only be achieved by having staff who are motivated, capable and supported to deliver it. Our system is only as strong as the people who are interacting with our students every day, and the people who are dedicated to supporting them.

This statement describes our position on equipping students for a successful future and how we will enable all of our staff to give their best, whether they are school leaders, teachers or support staff. Everyone working in education must be supported to focus our collective efforts on the core business of teaching and learning, including those in schools, regional offices and central services.

Western Australia's history of public schooling spans nearly 200 years, and long before this, Aboriginal people were the first educators passing down knowledge through storytelling, rituals and customs, and through connection to Country, culture and kin. Together, we will continue to value these teaching and learning traditions and realise our aspirations for our students and our people.



Jay Peckitt  
Director General





# Our aspirations

**In the public school system,  
we aspire to achieve these things:**

1. Every student achieving their potential.
  2. Quality teaching and learning in every classroom.
  3. Purposeful leadership of every school.
  4. Clear direction and support across the system.
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## **Navigating an increasingly complex world**

The central challenge facing us today is how to make progress on these aspirations in an operating environment that is much more complex than ever before. Students are coming to school with increasingly diverse needs. Teachers are being stretched by the complexity of these needs, which distracts from their core business of educating their students. And school leaders are faced with the challenge of balancing the expectations of students, staff, families and central services.

Our students are growing up in a very different world to that of previous generations. The dominance of screens in the lives of children, the increasing incidence of poor mental health, the economic pressures on families, and increasing inequity, all bear directly on what students bring to the classroom.

There are growing expectations that schools will extend their remit and go further beyond their core educational purpose to address these broader social issues and their impact on children and young people. This makes the job of teaching and school leadership much more challenging – but not insurmountable.



**We want all our students  
to challenge themselves  
and achieve their personal  
best throughout their  
schooling career.**

# Every student achieving their potential

**We have high aspirations for our students. We base this on the knowledge that every one of them has their own strengths and abilities, and that by recognising and developing these, we can set them up for a successful future.**

We want each student to leave school knowing what they are good at and confident that they can use their strengths to make their way in the world. In our changing global economy, we must equip our students with the knowledge and resilience to adapt, contribute and flourish in a world of new and emerging industries and vocations.

## **A focus on the whole student**

We want all our students to challenge themselves, achieve their personal best throughout their schooling career and gain a breadth and depth of skills and knowledge to enable them to transition to their chosen pathway post-school.

But our schools have always been about much more than academics. Our people endeavour to develop well-rounded individuals who are happy and secure in themselves, optimistic and self-confident, able to get along with others, and who have the self-discipline needed to achieve worthwhile goals and bounce back from the setbacks that will inevitably come their way.

We must also realise our aspirations for students who often experience unique barriers to learning and development, such as Aboriginal students, students with diverse needs, students with disability, and students living in regional and remote areas. Every young person in Western Australia deserves a good education.

The focus on student wellbeing has become more acute in recent years as community concern about the mental health of young people has intensified. School staff have long understood that they make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of all students by ensuring they have a sense of connection and belonging to the school community and experience success in some aspect of school life.

The area of student mental health and wellbeing presents challenges that require a more significant response from the system than what currently exists. Work is underway to deliver additional and more integrated support to schools, such as support for principals to develop whole-school approaches to student wellbeing, including clear and consistent referral pathways for those students needing support from external services.

## **Meeting student needs**

The adjustments that teachers make through their normal teaching practice enable most students to make good progress. But there continues to be a small number of students who, despite everyone's best efforts and for a range of reasons, are not able to effectively engage with our schooling system. This is particularly true for some Aboriginal students, where cultural safety and a sense of belonging are critical to engagement and success. We need to think differently about how we help these students progress as learners, without placing additional demands or contributing to further complexity in our schools and classrooms.

We can learn from alternative delivery models that some schools are already implementing alongside the regular classroom-based delivery model, in order to identify options that may better support these students. This will help us to more effectively align our resources with student needs and reduce some of the challenges and complexities that exist in our classrooms.

We also have an increasing number of students with disability in our schools and a growing number of neurodiverse students. These students deserve a public school system that meets their needs and recognises their individual strengths and abilities. We will set out a plan for how we will implement practical changes that not only better support students with disability and neurodiversity but also deliver overall benefits for the system.



### Supporting students through wraparound services

We know that an increasing number of our students require access to a range of services that exist in other government and non-government agencies. We are committed to better supporting students through greater collaboration with other government agencies. This includes trialling place-based delivery models and more integrated case management and referral pathways to provide our students with better access to community, health and other human services support.

We will also boost our partnerships with community-based organisations, including Aboriginal-led organisations, to ensure students are receiving local support that is right for their context, particularly in regional and remote areas.

### The early years

The early years of children's lives are critical to their future prospects, as this is when they are introduced to the fundamental skills that enable the rest of their learning journey. The first years of education are particularly important for those students who, for a range of reasons, would otherwise struggle to make good progress. We owe it to them to provide the foundations, including supporting their social and emotional development and instilling a love for learning, on which they can build a successful school career.

In the years ahead, every effort will be made to ensure all young children have access to quality early childhood programs. Central to this will be a commitment to ensure that our early childhood educators are equipped to deliver the kinds of learning experiences that will set students up for success in the years that follow.

Attracting and retaining early childhood teachers and support staff, alongside providing opportunities for our current staff to specialise in early education, will be a priority. By having more qualified early childhood staff in schools, more students will benefit from a strong start to schooling.



# Quality teaching and learning in every classroom

The Quality Teaching Strategy is the cornerstone of our efforts to improve the effectiveness of teaching across the public school system. The core belief that underpins the strategy is that teachers learn best when they work in a school that has a culture that expects and supports every teacher to maximise their effectiveness.

## Enabling effective teaching

In future years, the Quality Teaching Strategy will continue to support teachers to build their skills in high-impact teaching strategies and will also focus on support for building positive teacher-student relationships, particularly in relation to teachers' classroom management skills, which are a critical part of effective teaching. It will continue to enhance teaching effectiveness through the Teaching for Impact statement, strengthening school capability and helping more students develop the foundational literacy and numeracy skills they need for ongoing learning success.

Future efforts will build on the Leading Cultures of Teaching Excellence program and include a stronger focus on teacher-student relationships and the central importance of mastery and accomplishment to student learning and wellbeing.

## Relationships are at the core

Our best teachers have always built positive relationships where students feel understood, where their strengths are acknowledged and where they feel the teacher cares about their progress and their welfare. For students to be happy at school, they need to feel that they have a place where they can belong and feel connected through their relationships with their teachers and their peers. Education assistants and other school support staff also play an integral role in building these relationships, in and beyond the classroom.

It's not just the relationships between teachers and students that are a critical component of quality teaching, so too are the relationships between teachers. If teachers have collaborative relationships where they share strategies, plan together as a team, give each other feedback and support each other to solve problems, both their individual and collective effectiveness is enhanced.





# Purposeful leadership of every school

**Schools are more than just a collection of classrooms – they are organisations that have their own culture and relationships that directly affect the performance and satisfaction of all those who work in them – students and staff. In this unique environment, the importance of purposeful school leadership cannot be overstated. When a school leader has the clarity and vision to guide their school community, everyone is supported to succeed.**

## **School leaders to lead with confidence**

We aspire for every one of our schools to have a culture of high expectations and high support – for staff as well as students. This requires purposeful leadership. Our people operate at their best when they know what is expected of them, when they are trusted to do their job, when they get quality feedback about how they are going, and when they get opportunities to grow and lead improvement.

A good leadership culture encourages and champions sustainable and measured ways of working. With the right support for principals, the core business of leading a great school should be achievable without being required to work unreasonable hours. This includes having the right systems in place to assist school leaders through incident response and recovery.

Through their leadership, principals must set and support their school's culture to be one where every student and staff member can thrive. The Principal Professional Review process introduced in recent years provides opportunities for principals to receive feedback on their leadership. We will continue to work with leaders at all levels to develop and enhance the skills and attributes they need to operate effectively, while laying the groundwork for a more connected and coherent approach to leadership across the system.

We also expect school leaders to build strong relationships between their school and local community. These relationships create a welcoming and accessible environment for students, parents and families, and are crucial for fostering the professionalism and respect required to allow school leaders and teachers the space to do their work well.

## **Supporting school improvement**

Over the years, a school improvement and accountability model has been established. We will better integrate the elements of this model to ensure they collectively enhance schools' self-assessment and improvement processes. By showing how they connect and the role of each, we can strengthen and clarify this model of school improvement to support our school leaders.

We will strengthen the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework to more deeply embed it in our cycle of school improvement so that all our schools are culturally safe places for learning that enable Aboriginal students to succeed as Aboriginal people.

School leaders have made it clear in recent years that in seeking to improve their school, the most valuable support is not providing more documents – it is giving them better access to people who will sit down with them as professional colleagues and help them to solve problems. That is what will guide our future school improvement strategies.

# Clear direction and support across the system

For the public school system to maximise its effectiveness, strong leadership is required at both school and system levels. While some of the complex challenges that each school faces are unique to that school, most are not – they are systemic issues and as such require clear direction across the system.

## Strengthening central leadership and support

Over more than a decade, schools and their communities have been empowered through shifting decision-making authority from central to local levels, such as more control over staff selection, workforce planning and budget use. As we move forward, the principle of school decision-making to meet local needs will remain. We also acknowledge that in some circumstances clearer central direction is needed to enable a consistent approach to systemwide challenges.

Looking ahead, where a consistent system approach can bring clarity or reduce complexity, we will adopt it. At the same time, we are committed to embracing and amplifying the great practices already happening in our schools. By improving how we share and connect these successes, we can strengthen our whole system of public schools.

We know the needs of our schools are changing and our support services need to continue to evolve to ensure they meet these changing needs and expectations.

Our aim is to have differentiated support services that are responsive, efficient and fit for purpose, aligned to the needs of schools, with a core focus on reducing administrative burden to contribute to alleviating workload pressure for schools.

## Keeping our staff in the public education system

We want all staff to have a long and rewarding career in public education, but we know that our school staff are experiencing immediate workload pressures. Our approach to improvement is based on this simple proposition – if we want to do better for our students, we have to do better for our people.

We will be taking further steps to relieve workload pressures. Some of this is about ‘red tape’, like streamlining recruitment processes for schools. But more importantly it’s about addressing the complexity that our staff are experiencing by simplifying their roles in a way that enables them to focus on what will make a difference for students.

In the years ahead, we will continue to foster a working environment – whether that be in schools, in regional offices, or in central services – where staff have a strong sense of meaning from their work, where they are trusted to do their jobs, where they feel they are having a significant impact, and where they feel confident they have the capability to succeed in their role.

We will also develop a broader workforce plan that sets out a more strategic approach to how we attract, retain and develop all of our staff. This will ensure that we have a sustainable pipeline of great people to support our public education system into the future, especially in regional and remote areas.

### A safe place to work

All of our people need to feel safe and listened to in their respective schools and workplaces. This is key to achieving our broader educational goals, as a healthy and motivated workforce is essential for delivering the highest quality education to our students. We will release a comprehensive suite of health and safety resources and focus on providing staff with the opportunities to develop and progress in their careers.

We are providing additional support to schools through the establishment of a new Work Health and Safety directorate with increased leadership and resources. Supporting staff through the psychosocial hazards that are emerging in the modern world will be a focus for this team. We can only ask our people to come in each day if we can ensure every place in our system is a safe place to work.

### Unlocking new ways of working

Pilots and small-scale trials are a key aspect of our approach to innovation in education, ensuring that new ways of working can be tested before growing into systemwide initiatives. We will design and trial place-based approaches to delivering a full service school model, new ways of identifying and supporting the needs of students with disability and innovative student-wellbeing practices. Embracing technology is also essential for a modern public education system, enabling us to meet the evolving needs of our students and staff. By integrating advanced digital tools and resources, such as generative AI, we can enhance teaching and learning experiences, making education more accessible and efficient for everyone involved.

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**These aspirations put our students first – every child achieving their potential through quality teaching and learning. They ensure our people are supported – by purposeful leadership and safe, respectful workplaces. And they provide system clarity – through clearer direction and the courage to embrace innovative approaches where they are needed.**



**Shaping the future**